

**Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest**

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*The****Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest****is a biweekly collection of brief summaries of English-language articles related to conservation, environment and sustainability that have appeared in print or online in Indonesian, regional or global media. We welcome all comments, suggestions, and corrections.*

***Starling Resources****is an Indonesia-based sustainability consulting and advisory practice designing solutions to demanding environmental, social and economic challenges at local, regional and global scales with a focus on the Asia-Pacific region. We work with stakeholders across sectors to find practical solutions to demanding environmental, social and economic challenges and help build resilient communities that work together to enhance and sustain ecosystem functions and natural habitats. Our structured frameworks and approaches systematically consider complexity across sectors to address critical gaps in enabling conditions across finance, policy, capacity, institutions and socio-cultural dynamics.*

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**A.**    **The Covid-19 Crisis in Indonesia**

[**Indonesia faces post-Idul Fitri Covid-19 surge, reports highest rise in Covid-19 cases in more than three months**](https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2021/06/08/indonesia-faces-post-idul-fitri-covid-19-surge-from-central-java-east-java.html)

—Dio Suhenda, *The Jakarta Post, 8-*9 June 2021

Indonesia reported 7,725 new coronavirus infections on 8 June, the highest daily number since February, bringing the total to 1.87 million cases. The country’s Covid-19

Task Force also reported 170 deaths, taking the total to 52,162. Concern about another Covid-19 wave is growing as Central and East Java recorded rising case numbers following increased public movement during the Idul Fitri holidays in May. Central Java experienced the biggest spike, reporting 5,560 new cases from May 24-30, with Kudus regency experiencing a 30-fold increase in the number of cases due to grave visits and gatherings which National Covid-19 Task Force spokesperson Wikku Adisasmito described as “religious tourism.” The Covid-19 surge has attracted national concern, prompting Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin and other leaders to make inspection visits to the regions.

[**Indonesian government plans to extend quarantine for travelers from virus-hit countries from 5 to 14 days**](https://en.antaranews.com/news/175890/govt-plans-14-day-quarantine-for-travelers-from-abroad)

—*Antarnews,*4 June 2021

In order to prevent importation of new Covid-19 cases, the government plans to extend the quarantine requirement for travellers from countries experiencing the Covid-19 crisis from 5 days (5x24 hours) to 14 days (14x24 hours), Wiku Adisasmito, a government spokesperson for Covid-19 handling said at a press teleconference. The five-day quarantine requirement has been mandatory for all foreign and Indonesian nationals traveling in Indonesia since 24 February, with the exception of foreign nationals holding diplomatic visas or official visas related to official or state visits for ministry-level officials.

[**Indonesia reinforces hospitals amid worrying Covid-19 surge in some areas**](https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesia-reinforces-hospitals-amid-worrying-covid-19-surge-some-areas-2021-06-07/)

—*Reuters,*7 June 2021

Authorities have drafted in more doctors and nurses to red areas on the islands of Java an Madura after hospitals there approached full capacity amid a spike in coronavirus cases, Minister of Health Budi Gunadi Sadikin said. Hospitals had reached 90% of capacity in the district of Kudus in Java and Bangkalan on Madura. In Kudus, about 300 healthcare workers had contracted Covid-19, according to local media reports, while in Bandung, the capital of West Java Province, 79% of hospital capacity is already committed. Some Indonesian medical experts are calling for stricter controls on movements. “We’re just waiting for it to explode,” University of Indonesia epidemiologist Tri Yunis Miko Wahyono said. “Kudus and Bangkalan have exploded.”

[**Second consecutive *haj*cancellation devastates pilgrims**](https://www.thejakartapost.com/paper/2021/06/06/second-haj-cancellation-devastates-pilgrims.html)

—Yerica Lai, *The Jakarta Post,*7 June 2021

Yeti Farida from Garut, West Java has waited nearly eight years to participate in the *haj*to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, a pilgrimage that Muslims who are fit and able are obliged to make once in their lives. In 2020, however, the Covid-19 epidemic forced the Ministry of Religious Affairs to effectively cancel the *haj,*making her wait another year. Now the world’s most populous Muslim-majority country has cancelled the pilgrimage again. Indonesia usually has the world’s largest quota of *haj*pilgrims. In 2020 it had planned to send 221,000 people to Mecca. Religious Affairs Minister Yaqut Cholil Qoumas said that Saudi authorities had not yet announced whether the *haj*and the *umrah*(minor haj) would be open this year to international pilgrims, including those from Indonesia. Dadi Darmadi of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University said the ministry’s decision had been too rushed and that the social and religious value of the pilgrimage for Indonesia’s Muslims made it too important to be cancelled again this year.

[**Studies:  Covid-19 far more widespread in Indonesia than official data shows**](https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/exclusive-covid-19-far-more-widespread-indonesia-than-official-data-show-studies-2021-06-03/)

—Tom Allard, *Reuters*, 3 June 2021

Indonesia has recorded 1.87 million Covid-19 cases, but epidemiologists have long believed the true extent of the pandemic has been obscured by a lack of testing and contact tracing.  One nationwide seroprevalence study over December-January suggested 15% of Indonesians had already contracted the virus when official figures at the end of January estimated the total number of infections to be just 0.4% of population. A seroprevalence study in Bali found 17% of those tested appeared to have been infected. Siti Nadia Tarmizi, a senior health ministry official, said it is possible there are more cases than have been officially reported because many cases are asymptomatic. Seroprevalence studies, based on blood tests, detect antibodies in people who have already had the disease. The official disease figures are largely based on swab tests which only reveal those who have the disease at the time. Pandu Riono, a University of Indonesia epidemiologist, said Indonesia still appeared to be far from achieving herd immunity - making it a priority to speed up vaccination.

[**Moody’s pegs 2023 for Indonesia to achieve significant herd resilience**](https://www.thejakartapost.com/paper/2021/06/03/moodys-pegs-2023-for-indonesias-herd-immunity.html)

—*The Jakarta Post,*4 June 2021

Indonesia is projected to achieve significant resilience to the coronavirus pandemic only in early 2023 or later, finding itself among several Asia-Pacific countries that may be left behind as other countries achieve that by early 2022. Like other countries, Indonesia faces difficulties in procuring enough vaccines and accelerating its vaccination program, noted Moody Analytics Chief APAC Economist Steven G. Cochrane. The Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan and Thailand could share the same fate, Cochrane said. The situation puts Indonesia’s economic recovery targets “at risk” as the country may face a prolonged struggle to contain Covid-19. Concurring with Moody’s assessment, Airlangga University epidemiologist Windhu Purnomo warned the government that Indonesia might reach herd immunity only in early 2023, much later than its stated target of late 2021 or early 2022.  Windhu said the country’s vaccination program was proceeding slowly because of limited vaccine supply. Only 27 million doses have been administered in the five months since February, far below the target of 30 million jabs each month.

**B.**    **Marine & Fisheries**

[**NGOS back ambitious plan to save Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna**](https://news.mongabay.com/2021/06/ngos-back-maldives-ambitious-plan-to-save-indian-ocean-yellowfin-tuna/)

—Malavika Vyawahare, *Mongabay*, 8 June 2021

Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus* *albacares*), one of the most profitable fisheries in the world, is just a few years away from collapse. Exploitative industrial fishing practiced over decades by the EU, and increasingly important artisanal fisheries in coastal states have decimated the population. There is consensus among members of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), the intergovernmental body charged with managing the stock, that overfishing must stop. But sharp divisions persist on how steep the cuts should be and who should be making them. It has pitted a group of distant-water fishing nations, led by the EU, which hauls in the largest share of the fish, backed by South Korea and Japan, against Indian Ocean states like the Maldives, Indonesia, Kenya and South Africa. EU tuna fisheries pull in a third of all yellowfin tuna from the Indian Ocean, operating through vessels flagged to France and Spain and through ships flagged to small coastal states like Seychelles and Mauritius that are ultimately controlled by EU companies.

[**After missed chances, Indian Ocean fishery body must protect yellowfin tuna**](https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2021/06/02/indian-ocean-fishery-body-must-protect-yellowfin-tuna-stop-illegal-fishing)

—Glenn Holmes*, Pew Trusts*, 2 June 2021

Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna is among the world’s most valuable fish, worth US$4.19 billion at final point of sale, but the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) has allowed overfishing to continue despite yellowfin being overfished since 2015. Having concluded last year’s annual meeting and a special session in March without agreement on a revised rebuilding plan, it is critical that the Commission reach consensus to immediately end overfishing and advance long-term science-based management at its 2021 annual meeting being held online from 7-11 June. Yellowfin is not the only stock in need of action. Total allowable catches of skipjack tuna have been exceeded every year since their introduction in 2018. Stronger fisheries management measures must be accompanied by better compliance among Commission members. Strengthening control of transhipment—the transfer of catch from fishing vessels to other boats at sea—and improved vessel monitoring systems (VMS) can help. It’s still not too late for the IOTC to do the right thing.

**C.**    **Forests & Land Use**

[**From Flores to Papua:  Meet ten of Indonesia’s mangrove forest guardians**](https://news.mongabay.com/2021/06/from-flores-to-papua-meet-10-of-indonesias-mangrove-guardians/)

—Loren Bell, *Mongabay,*1 June 2021

Indonesia has more mangroves than anywhere else on earth. Its 17,500 islands account for 3.2 million ha of mangrove forest, about a fifth of the world’s remaining mangrove area.  These important ecosystems, crucial for marine habitat, flood control, storm protection and carbon sequestration, are quickly being cleared. But there are individuals and local groups, toiling in obscurity, and working to protect and restore mangroves habitats. In North Sumatra, Tazruddin “Sangkot” Hasibuan took the initiative to rally community leaders and youth groups to start restoring mangroves around their villages. On Flores, Vinsensius Litan Witi and his wife have been planting mangroves around their village since the 1990s. In South Sulawesi, 84-year-old M. Taiyeb began planting mangroves in 1985, ultimately creating the Tongke-tongke Mangrove Forest to protect homes from coastal erosion and tidal flooding. On Java, Saptoyo’s project to reclaim agricultural land at Clungup Beach for mangroves has grown into an NGOs developing restoration and ecotourism programs protecting several endangered beaches and coral reefs.

[**Peatland restoration remains half-hearted**](https://www.thejakartapost.com/paper/2021/06/07/peatland-restoration-remains-half-hearted-study-finds.html)

—A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil, *The Jakarta Post,*8 June 2021

When the forest and peatland fires that destroyed 2.6 million ha of land in Sumatra and Kalimantan in 2015 were finally extinguished, the government immediately called for restoration of degraded peatland across the country. But a recent study shows that most concession holders have failed to properly restore wetlands despite being obliged to do so.  Pantau Gambut examined 1,222 peatland areas where wildfires occurred over 2015-2019 on 43 concessions spread across seven provinces. The group found that most of the peatland areas still had no restoration infrastructure such as canals, dams, or deep wells used to rewet dried peatland or extinguish fires, while only 2% had restoration infrastructure in good condition. Of 405 peatland areas experiencing tree cover loss, more than half were replanted with oil palms or acacia trees for industrial forests, totalling 420,000 ha. Over the same period, 1 million ha of peatland inside concession areas was burned, of which 68% was left unrestored while the rest was planted with oil palm or acacia trees.

Report:   [**Pantau Gambut, Membedah Teka-Teki Kegiatan Perlindungan Ekosistem Gambut di Area Berizin**](https://www.pantaugambut.id/publikasi/membedah-teka-teki-kegiatan-perlindungan-ekosistem-gambut-di-area-berizin) (28 May 2021, includes link to Executive Summary in English, “Unravelling the Puzzles of Peat Ecosystem Protection on the Permit Area”,

[**Carbon markets that do not recognize rights of indigenous people are not viable**](https://news.mongabay.com/2021/06/we-guard-the-forest-carbon-markets-without-community-recognition-not-viable/)

—Dimitri Selibas, *Mongabay,*4 June 2021

Research by the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) and McGill University shows that in 31 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that hold almost 70% of the world’s tropical forests—including the five countries with the largest expanses of tropical forest: Brazil, DR Congo, Indonesia, Peru and Columbia—the rights of indigenous people over carbon in their customary lands still need to be defined. These five countries represent at least 62% of the total feasible natural climate solution potential and the bulk of carbon offset opportunities.  The research was conducted in the context of a global task force to rapidly expand voluntary carbon markets. Major international corporations like Amazon, Unilever, Salesforce, Airbnb and Nestle are pushing to mobilize at least US$1 billion using Architecture for REDD+ Transactions (ART) to tackle deforestation and forest degradation. Countries with large extents of tropical forest thus stand to benefit from initiatives that can offer significant economic incentives for protecting forests by selling carbon credits.

Report:  [**Taskforce on Scaling Voluntary Carbon Markets**](https://www.iif.com/tsvcm)**,**January 2021

Report:  Architecture for REDD+ Transactions, [**Attracting New Investment to Protect and Restore Forests**](https://www.artredd.org/)**,**2021

[**Biodiesel program drives deforestation by boosting demand domestic for palm oil**](https://news.mongabay.com/2021/06/indonesias-biodiesel-program-fuels-deforestation-threat-report-warns/)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay,* 9 June 2021

A new report from Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) warns of conflicting policies and lack of transparency around biofuel regulations in Indonesia’s aggressive push for greater adoption of palm-based biofuel, including fines and/or threat of license revocation for producers to fail to meet biofuel mandates, and argues that biofuel policies “create conditions for producers to maintain business-as-usual production instead of investing in more sustainable production innovations, such as boosting land productivity .. [so] biofuel regulations in Indonesia may lead to more pressure on Indonesian forests. An 2019 study showed that oil palm plantations were already the largest single driver of deforestation from 2001 to 2016, accounting for 23% of deforestation nationwide. Unless the palm oil that goes into biodiesel can be shown to be deforestation-free, it’s misleading to claim that biodiesel is “green fuel”. Conflicting policies include the 2018 moratorium on issuing permits for new oil palm plantations, while Ministry of Agriculture data shows that plantation area actually expanded by more than 2 million ha (14%) since 2018.

Report:  Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), [**How Green are Biofuels?  Understanding the risks and policy landscape in Indonesia**](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AspYXFjULLfjHKAf7sJ858vqP6J-Iiep/view)(2021)

Paper:  Kemen G. Austin et al, **“**[**What causes deforestation in Indonesia?**](https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/aaf6db)” *Environmental Research Letters* *14*:2 (2019)

**Six forest hotspots identified in north Sumatra**

—Juraidi, Fardah, [*Antaranews.com*](http://Antaranews.com), 9 June 2021

The Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) detected six forest and/or peatland hotspots indicating likely forest fires in North Sumatra Province on 9 June, an increase from five the previous today. In late May, activists of the Indonesian Environmental Forum (Walhi) chapter in South Sumatra had reported hundreds of hotspots with the potential to trigger or become forest fires over the previous month. The hotspots were due to agricultural land, plantations, and forest areas being burnt and producing haze, M. Hairul Sobri, Executive Director of Walhi’s South Sumatra Chapter said.

**D.**    **Energy, Mining and Climate Change**

[**West Papua revokes a quarter million hectares of land from palm oil**](https://news.mongabay.com/2021/06/west-papua-revokes-quarter-of-a-million-hectares-of-land-from-palm-oil/)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay,* 3 June 2021

Permits for twelve oil palm plantation concessions covering 267,857 ha (2,679 km2), equivalent to the total area of Hong Kong have been withdrawn by West Papua Province due to irregularities and violations. Nine of the license holders lacked a right-to-cultivate permit, while three other concession holders were found to be operating with expired or faulty permits. Last May, more than 200 members of indigenous communities marched to the office of the South Sorong district head to demand their land rights be recognized.  “Today, we from the Tehit Indigenous tribe came here to reject palm oil companies, protest leader Yuliana Kedemes said. But there is concern that the government may simply reissue the concession permits to other companies, as occurred with the Tanah Merah project in Kabupaten Boven Digoel in Papua Province. “While there’s a policy to revoke the licenses, there’s no commitment [from the government] to manage [the forests sustainably], and so new permits were immediately issued to new companies,” said Franky Samperante, director of Pusaka.

[**More than US$800 million donations in pipeline for Indonesia Environment Fund**](https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2021/05/31/more-than-800m-donations-in-pipeline-for-indonesia-environment-fund.html)

—Vincent Fabian Thomas, *The Jakarta Post,*1 June 2021

Indonesia is in talks to secure US$836 million in green funds to finance environmental protection and climate change mitigation efforts in one the world’s leading countries for greenhouse gas emissions. State funding will not be sufficient to meet the need for at least US$247 billion over 2018 to 2030 to implement Indonesia’s nationally determined contribution (NDC) to the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement. The Indonesia Environment Fund (IEF) said at least six donors had either agreed to or were discussing the financing of green projects over 2021 and 2030. Specific funds include reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, or REDD+ (Norway); emissions reductions in East Kalimantan (Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, FCPF); an initiative for Jambi Province (BioCarbon Fund, BCF); safeguard indicators, environmental and social monitoring systems and action plans (The World Bank); and programs supported by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Ford Foundation.

[**Indonesia to retire existing coal-fired power plants while also adding new ones**](https://news.mongabay.com/2021/06/indonesia-to-retire-coal-fired-power-plants-while-also-adding-more/)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay,* 8 June 2021

PLN, Indonesia’s state-owned electricity utility says it will start shutting down existing coal-fired power plants, phasing out 50 GW of capacity by 2055, but at the same time, the utility is on track to build 117 new coal plants with a total generating capacity of 21 GW whose operating life will last to until 2065. The new plants will churn out 107 million tons of CO2 emissions each year, according to Andi Prasetiyo of Trend Asia. “We need to phase out coal but our target is net zero emissions, not zero emissions, said Ridha Yasser, Assistant Deputy for Energy in the Coordinating Ministry for Investments said not all coal-fired plants need to be shut down. But Pamela Simamora of the Institute for Essential Services Reform (IESR) said this kind of thinking ignores the fact that continued use of coal could lead to Indonesia’s exports being hit by future border adjustment carbon taxes. “Our products would become more expensive and less competitive, Pamela said.

[**Energy ministry official:  “No urgency” for Indonesia to reach net zero emissions**](https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2021/06/09/no-urgency-for-indonesia-to-reach-net-zero-energy-ministry-official.html)

—Vincent Fabian Thomas, *The Jakarta Post,*9 June 2021

A senior ministry official said achieving net zero emissions was not an urgent priority for the country’s power industry. “Other countries have declared their net zero emissions targets, [but] Indonesia has not, and frankly I see no urgency yet,” Rida Mulyana, Director-General for Electricity of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources told a virtual press conference. Rida acknowledged that the government was committed to reducing coal-fired power plants, but noted that regulators leaned toward the plants’ “natural retirement”, a strategy that absolved the government from having to compensate power plant developers for lost income. Grita Anindarini, head of environmental governance and climate justice at the Indonesian Center for Environmental Law (ICEL), said while Indonesia has no legal obligation to achieve net zero emissions, studies show this will be necessary to fulfil obligations under the Paris Agreement which Indonesia ratified in 2016. Indonesia’s current climate policy requires only a 29% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions relative to a business-as-usual scenario under its Nationally-Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement.

[**Indonesia can achieve “Zero Emissions” by 2050 if government fully commits to realizing energy transition**](https://iesr.or.id/en/iesr-indonesia-capable-of-achieving-zero-emissions-by-2050-government-must-fully-commit-to-realizing-energy-transition)

—*Institute for Essential Services Reform,*4 June 2021

The Institute for Essential Services Reform (IESR) has launched a new study, “Deep Decarbonization of Indonesia’s Energy System:  A Pathway to Zero Emissions by 2050” in collaboration with Germany’s Agora Energiewende and Finland’s Lappeenranta University of Technology (LUT). Fabby Tumiwa, Executive Director of IESR, said the report shows it would be technically possible and economically viable for Indonesia to achieve zero emissions by 2050, in contrast to government modelling that says Indonesia cannot reach carbon neutrality until 2070. The report notes that the future costs o generating renewable energy in Indonesia, especially solar energy, will be cheaper than fossil fuel, reducing the levelized cost of electricity (LCOE) and lowering electricity prices. Pamela Simamora, lead author of the report, said that achieving zero emissions by 2050 would create 3.2 million new jobs, more than the number of jobs at risk of being lost, which is 1.3 million. “[Photovoltaic] solar will be the backbone of our energy system, supported by storage systems (batteries), electrification, and clean fuel,” Pamela concluded.

Report:  IESR, [**Deep decarbonization of Indonesia’s energy system:  A pathway to zero emissions by 2050**](https://iesr.or.id/pustaka/deep-decarbonization-of-indonesias-energy-system-a-pathway-to-zero-emissions-by-2050)**,**(2021)

Report:[**Could Rooftop solar open opportunities in Indonesia’s power ecosystem?**](https://www.thejakartapost.com/paper/2021/06/04/could-rooftop-solar-open-opportunities-in-ris-power-ecosystem.html)

—Alex Dolya and Marco Lackovic (BCG), *The Jakarta Post*, 5 June 2021

Solar photovoltaics (PV) is now a mature and disruptive energy technology, leading capacity additions around the world. Global installation of new solar PV is expected to exceed 160 GW in 2022, almost 50% more than in 2019, framed by a need for US$6 trillion in power sector investment to 2025, outpacing oil and gas investments and underpinned by expansion of renewable energy. Rooftop solar is a critical element of this opportunity, unlocking the substantial generating capacity of building stock across Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. Rooftop solar provides an opportunity to generate significant volumes of zero-carbon renewable energy from otherwise underutilized urban and commercial environments. Indonesia offers fertile ground for rooftop solar technology, with capacity growth potential of up to 3 GW by 2025, as the country boasts vital headroom between local electricity tariffs, and the cost of rooftop solar electricity. The financial case is strengthened by the potential to sell excess power generated back into the grid, but prices offered for this excess electricity are generally lower than grid electricity rates.

[**COP26 President urges Indonesia to set more ambitious climate target**](https://www.thejakartapost.com/paper/2021/06/03/cop26-president-urges-ri-to-set-more-ambitious-climate-target.html)

—A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil, *The Jakarta Post,*4 June 2021

Alok Sharma, the UK Business Secretary who also serves as president of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) scheduled for Glasgow in November met with Ministry of Environment and Forestry Siti Nurbaya Bakar and other Indonesian leaders in Jakarta in late May to urge the country to undertake more ambitious efforts emissions reduction efforts to prevent catastrophic impacts from climate change. Indonesian officials have recently discussed setting a net-zero emissions target for Indonesia for 2070, which some critics charge would be 20 years too late. In a joint press briefing with Sharma, Minister Siti said Indonesia aims to be carbon neutral in the forestry sector by 2030, but that it would be challenging to reduce emissions in the energy sector beyond what has already been committed without stronger support from international partners and the private sector to provide investment funds and technology to reduce reliance on coal and add more renewables. “Green growth while cutting emissions is possible,” Sharma said.

**E.**    **Pollution and Waste Management**

[**Indonesia faces a plastic waste emergency**](https://chinadialogueocean.net/17615-indonesias-plastic-waste-emergency/)

—Nabiha Shahab, *China Dialogue Ocean*, 9 June 2021

According to the UN, around 8 million tons of plastic waste is dumped into the ocean every year. Indonesia contributes more than 600,000 tons of that, according to the Indonesian Institute of Sciences. The Covid-19 pandemic has made things worse, adding discarded masks and other protective gear to the country’s leaking waste management systems. Plastic waste is ubiquitous and transboundary, with ocean currents transporting it in multiple directions, including to uninhabited islands. In 2017, Indonesia committed to reduce marine plastic debris up to 70% by 2025, and banned single-use plastic in mini-markets. Novrizal Tahar, director of solid waste management at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, said marine plastic waste has already been reduced by over 15%, citing an unpublished report. But the government’s efforts appear insufficient to curb the problem. “Our waste management system is still the basic collect-transport-dispose method, said Greenpeace campaigner Muharram Atha Rasyadi. “We don’t support converting plastic to fuel or energy because it doesn’t address the root of the problem.”

[**Covid-19 deepens marine waste crisis**](https://www.thejakartapost.com/paper/2021/06/09/covid-19-deepens-marine-waste-crisis.html)
—Marchio Irfan Gorbiano, et al, *The Jakarta Post,*10 June 2021

Since the Covid-19 virus hit Indonesia in March 2020, community-based groups have increasingly found surgical masks, latex gloves, and other medical waste ending up in rivers beaches and in the ocean. “It is very concerning because our group and other volunteers cannot go out to clean beaches as often as we used to or carry out large-scale clean-up efforts amid the pandemic, said Swietenia Puspa Lestari. Her community-based group, Divers Clean Action, recovered about 3.1 tons of waste in a clean-up effort at 16 beaches in Bali and West Nusa Tenggara last year. One third was single-use plastics. With almost non-existent waste management systems in place, coastal communities struggle to properly dispose of household waste. Indonesia’s waste crisis has become increasingly apparent, with plastic waste now dotting once-pristine sandy beaches and putting the likes of Bali’s status as an international tourist destination under threat. It also poses serious danger to marine wildlife, with beached whales and dead turtles discovered with masses of plastic waste in their digestive tracts.

**F.**    **Conservation and Protected Areas**

[**To keep tabs on ecosystem health in Borneo, follow these birds**](https://news.mongabay.com/2021/05/to-keep-tabs-on-ecosystem-health-in-borneo-follow-these-birds-study/)

—Basten Gokken, *Mongabay,*14 May 2021

A recent study by scientists from the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and Indonesia’s Tanjungpura University suggested looking at wild populations of a key bird species as a gauge for ecosystem health in Borneo. The study revealed that six Bornean bird species are strong indicators of intact forests—mixed dipterocarp and heath— in West Kalimantan. These include the great argus (*Argusianus argus*), the cinnamon-rumped trogon (*Harpactes orrhophaeus*) and the rhinocerous hornbill *(Buceros rhinoceros*). The study also found that three other species were good indicators of a depleted forest state and one was associated with mixed gardens, while none were indicators for oil palm plantations “Our results endorsed the general trend across the tropics of a reduction in bird species richness from complex natural and old secondary forests to simplified monoculture habitats,” Trifosa Iin Simamora, a CIFOR researcher, wrote in the paper. Conversion of forest to fallow stages reduced bird species richness by 18%, while conversion to industrial oil palm plantation reduced richness by 82%.

Paper:  T.I. Simamora et al, “[**Looking for indicator bird species in the context of forest fragmentation and isolation in West Kalimantan, Indonesia**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2351989421001608?dgcid=raven_sd_aip_email#!)”, *Global Ecology and Conservation,*Vol. 27, June 2021.

[**Ecosystem Guardians, or Threats?  Livelihood Security and Nature Conservation in the Maluku archipelago, Seram Island, and Manusela National Park**](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00074918.2021.1932744?needAccess=true)

—Stein Kristiansen et al, *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* (April 2021)

Ecosystem protection and environmental sustainability are a developmental challenges in Indonesia. Rainforests and biodiversity represent massive national and global assets, but are threatened by demographic change and economic growth. Maluku Province is one of Indonesia’s poorest, with a regional per capita product of only 40% of the national average.  People living in or near nature reserves may be guardians of forests, wildlife, and biodiversity, or they may represent threats. Challenging the idea that indigenous people adhering to traditional wisdom are the bet caretakers of forests, wildlife and biodiversity, this article focuses on how institutions impact on society and economic development. Do local communities find secure and sustainable livelihoods in areas surrounding national parks?  To what extend do communities near a park contribute to ecosystem protection? Natural resources are abundant and ecotourism potential prodigious, but people’s capacities and freedom to make use of resources are limited, and traditional livings of communities neighboring the park may be a risk rather than the solution to ecosystem protection.

**Launch Event:**[**Banking on Protected Areas:  Promoting Sustainable Protected Area Tourism to Benefit Local Communities**](https://www.worldbank.org/en/events/2021/06/14/banking-on-protected-areas-promoting-sustainable-protected-area-tourism-to-benefit-local-communities)**(14 June 2021)**

—*The World Bank,*14 June 2021

A new World Bank report, “Banking on Protected Areas:  Promoting Sustainable Protected Area Tourism to Benefit Local Communities” will launch on 14 June. The report estimates the economic impact of protected area tourism on local economies and makes the case that promoting sustainable tourism in protected areas should be actively included in economic recovery and development strategies to help support economic growth, generate jobs, and conserve biodiversity. Participants in the launch event will include World Bank Global Director for the Environment, Natural Resources and the Blue Economy Karin Kamper; World Bank Regional Director Mark Lundell; Lead Economist and study Lead Urvashi Narain, Vice President of Argentina’s National Parks Administration Natalia Jauri; Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forests and Environment for Bagamati Province of Nepal Sindhu Prasad Dhungana, and William Katongo, Acting Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Arts of the Government of Zambia.

**G.**   **Other**

[**Infrastructure:  First rail project on Sulawesi island picks up steam**](https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Transportation/First-rail-project-on-Indonesia-s-Sulawesi-island-picks-up-steam)

**—** Erwida Maulia, *Nikkei Asia*, 7 June 2021

The long-delayed project to build the first railway on the island of Sulawesi is gaining traction as contractors secure IDR 693.8 billion (US$48.5 million) in an Islamic law compliant syndicated loan led by Bank Syariah Indonesia (BSI). The financing agreement is for the construction of a 145-km system linking five municipalities and regencies in South Sulawesi Province, connecting the provincial capital Makassar with the town of Parepare. The line is the first phase of a grand, long-term plan to develop a 2,000-km trans-Sulawesi road network on the world’s 11th largest island enabling travel from Makassar on the southwestern tip to Manado at the northern end, part of President Joko Widodo’s infrastructure push to boost connectivity in the underdeveloped eastern half of the country, an archipelago of more than 17,000 islands. In contrast to the slow pace of railway construction, the government has been aggressive in building new roads. Other infrastructure projects in process include a China-backed high-speed railway connecting Jakarta with Bandung, the Japan-funded Patimban deep sea port in West Java, and the US$32 billion project to move the capital from Jakarta to East Kalimantan in 2024.

[**The Crackdown on Islamist ‘Radicals’ in Indonesia**](http://understandingconflict.org/en/conflict/read/100/The-Crackdown-on-Islamist-Radicals-in-Indonesia)

—*Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict*, IPAC Report No. 71, 25 May 2021

Indonesian President Joko Widodo’s crackdown on “radical” Islamists appears to have broad public support but runs the risk of undermining civil liberties, creating a political backlash, and pushing a few angry activists toward violence. The report examines the trajectory of the campaign against extremism from its origins as a reaction to the 2016 mass mobilisation which brought down the then Jakarta governor on blasphemy charges to the current drive against the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), which escalated dramatically after the return of the FPI leader Rizieq Shihab from self-imposed exile in Saudi Arabia and the police killing of six of Rizieq’s bodyguards in a still murky incident in December and a series of events in Makassar, South Sulawesi, including the March bombing of Makassar cathedral by terrorists with past links to FPI. “The report explains how FPI went from being a partner of the police in 2016 to being branded as a terrorist organization and why that branding could be counterproductive”, said Sidney Jones, IPAC Director. The report outlines three aspects of the anti-radicalism campaign which could have negative implications for democratic governance: (1) The effort to screen civil servants and academics at state institutions to prevent “radical” infiltration but with an overly broad definition of “radical” that can include government critics and no appeal mechanism for those identified. (2) The involvement of the military in some aspects of the campaign, on the assumption that one cause of radicalism is insufficient nationalism, which has raised concerns about the ongoing expansion of the military’s roles into non-military activities. (3) The banning of two Islamist organisations, FPI and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), by executive decree rather than through the judicial process outlined in the law on social organisations.

[**Indonesia court gives hard-line cleric jail term for flouting Covid-19 curbs**](https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesian-court-set-deliver-verdict-hardline-cleric-accused-flouting-covid-2021-05-27/)

—Kate Lamb, *Reuters,*27 May 2021

An Indonesian court sentenced hard-line Muslim cleric Rizieq Shihab to eight months in prison and fined him IDR 20 million ($1,400) for breaching coronavirus curbs after returning from self-imposed exile last year. Judge Suparman Nyompa handed the prison term to Rizieq, leader of the Islamic Defenders Front, for violating health quarantine law in connection to mass events, including his daughter’s wedding, which was attended by thousands of people. Prosecutors had sought a two-year sentence for inciting followers to attend mass gatherings, but Rizieq was cleared of that charge. His legal team claimed the cases were politically motivated and part of an effort to silence the cleric, who has a large and vocal following in the world’s biggest Muslim majority country. Rizieq returned in November after three years self-exile in Saudi Arabia while facing charges of pornography and insulting Indonesia’s state ideology. In December, police killed six of Rizieq’s bodyguards in a shootout at a Jakarta toll booth.

[**Prohibited material:  Indonesia adds another weapon to its speech-suppressing arsenal**](https://www.economist.com/asia/2021/06/05/indonesia-adds-another-weapon-to-its-speech-suppressing-arsenal)

—*The Economist,*5 June 2021

As Southeast Asia’s most robust democracy, Indonesia might have been expected to buck the trend of developing new tools of digital censorship, but under President Joko Widodo, senior officials have succumbed to what Ben Bland, the president’s biographer, calls “knee-jerk authoritarianism.” The latest weapon is Ministerial Regulation No. 5 (MR5), a new decree requiring digital platforms to remove prohibited content, defined as anything that violates Indonesian law, incites unrest or disturbs public order, within as little as four hours.  The law requires “private sector electronic service operators” such as social-media platforms, search engines and financial, cloud-computing and data-processing services to register with the government and provide sensitive information. When the Ministry of Communications issues a take-down notice, firms must comply within 24 hours, or four hours in the case of child pornography, material promoting terrorism, or “content which disturbs society.” Critics say the law is vague and poorly worded, making it ripe for misuse.  Merely using a virtual private network (VPN), for example, might become illegal.  Another concern is the requirement that companies provide law enforcement agencies with “direct access” to their systems and data. The government insists that it respects the right of privacy and freedom of expression. Citizens, firms, and its less democratic neighbors will be watching to see which way it goes.

The End